

Hi!

My name is Jane Marindany, and my ID number is 5600587, from Narok, Kenya.

I am an Mama of 5 children and 3 grandchildren. I am also the Chairlady of a Savings and Loan Association with so many members, of which are now able to take care of the needs of their homes. We are proud of the work of WE organization in our community. It has transformed my life, and the lives of the 582 women in our Women Cooperative.

Us women now we have a voice which is heard in our families for the first time. Many women with WE organization have begun businesses which have grown our income four times more than before! Before, we were depended upon our men but now we are able to take care of our needs and stand up for ourselves without help from our men. Even now, we have higher income than our husbands! These new roles do not disrupt our daily activities and do not go against our cultural norms.

WE began opportunities for us to get money that has improved our lives and our whole family's lives. This has given us a new independence which would have been impossible to achieve without WE's support.

WE has opened our eyes that we could plan our household budget. They showed us how to start our small businesses and grow them to be big. We started with rearing chickens and we grew to a bigger business of grazing cows. We women were so excited when we each owned our first goat! And now, we own dairy cows! Working closely with WE, I have seen this change happen in communities across Narok again and again and again! There are now more than 70 groups, representing thousands of women, who save money together and give loans to each other.

Also, we have a business together called Me To WE Artisans. Hundreds of women are employed with jobs. We women bead jewellery which is sold around the whole world, showing our culture. We put our love into each beaded item we make, and we are proud to know it is going to be worn by someone even who is so far away. When we bead, we share our culture while earning money for our children and families. My daughter Judy goes to the Women Empowerment Center every day and beads. She gets to sit with her friends and earn good money at the same time. The team and work of WE is highly welcomed in new communities every time because we know the improvements that come with WE.

Ten years ago I was living in a mud and grass house, and there were eight of us. I was not able to educate my kids because of my poverty. We had no access to water. Our girls would not go to school. Now today, I have built a new home of bricks which is the first symbol of what women can achieve on our own. My daughter is in the WE College studying Nursing. I only went up to Grade 3 myself. I see as if I can give my daughter a whole new good life. My kids have new opportunities that I never would have been able to give them without WE organization.

Our lives have changed because of WE's development work, and also because of the guests that Me To We brings to our homes. We LOVE having visitors visit our homesteads and we are happy when they play with our children at school. Our children have practiced their English and they learn there is a chance for any child – boy or girl – to excel in different roles or different subjects like sciences. I have personally hosted so many visitors to my own home, and am so happy to show them how I have built my own house and improved the cleanliness of my home through the 8 habits to a healthy home, like

built my own toilet. What I have learned is that every Mom everywhere in the world wants their kids to have a better life. My kids would not have this great life without WE.

I know how to read the true heart of someone's intent through their eyes. When Me To WE volunteers come to my home, they do not look at me with fear or pity. They look at me as a powerful woman, like an important person. They give me strength, and they tell me that I give them strength. We sit and exchange stories of our lives. They ask me about my culture, and I ask them about theirs. 'Why does your culture agree to let you to divorce your husband?' This is a question I don't understand and that I love to ask them. They ask me about jealousy in our community for those who have more in life. I tell them we say they are seen as the teachers to show others how they did it. 'How do the men see the women groups?' they like to ask me.

I share our history, and the Me To WE volunteers tell me of women in their country when they earned the right to vote. We have had so many conversations where we feel closer as human beings. I know that I have hundreds of colleagues in womanhood in this world. I have sisters around the world, and we can all support one another in solidarity – if we are neighbors or even if we will never see one another again. I welcome volunteers all of the time to my home to share my culture, my progress, and my pride. In turn, they give me encouragement and hope. I now have hundreds of friends, and when a volunteer knows the name 'Mama Jane' they know there are hard-working Mamas who fight poverty with work ethic and heart. We help one another in this world as we know we are together.

The Me to We trips have changed my life and our entire community. Hundreds of our men and women now have jobs. We now have opportunity.

I give thanks to the good partnership with WE because it has been a lot of blessings to mothers and the whole family. We pray for them to continue to touch and improve our lives and the lives of many people in our communities. The support of WE has changed my life and the lives of the other women in our savings and loans group has changed my life and the lives of every woman in our association. It has been a blessing to be a part of WE's women groups and to see it help so many mothers and children.

Thank you sincerely,

Jane Marindanyi
Community Leader
Chairwoman of Women's Savings and Loans Program
Narok, Kenya